



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Siela A. Bynoe

## Siela Bynoe: I made my budget priorities clear

SIELA A. BYNOE April 4, 2025



As a long-distance cyclist, I often rely on rest stops to acknowledge the progress I've made on my journeys, while keeping in mind the distance still to cover before reaching my destination. Now, as a freshman state senator, I found myself in a comparable situation with the Senate One-House Budget. While I was encouraged by the additions and restorations in that spending plan, I recognized the necessity of continuing our efforts to ensure that these provisions were included in the final state budget.

Throughout the budgeting process, I leveraged my extensive experience on the Westbury Board of Education, the Huntington Housing Authority and the Nassau County Legislature. My deep understanding of the challenges facing the county, combined with the skills I developed in these roles, has been invaluable in advocating for the specific line items included in the Senate budget.

Additionally, in my capacity as chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Libraries and a member of several other committees — including Consumer Protection, Education, Environmental Conservation, Investigations and Government Operations, Mental Health, and Transportation — I actively participated in public hearings to better understand the priorities that should be reflected in the state budget.

One pressing issue in the 6th District is the impact of charter school saturation on the Hempstead School District, which is grappling with a \$24 million budget deficit due to rising charter school-related expenses. Hempstead district officials indicated that closing the David Paterson Elementary School and laying off staff would be necessary to address the budget shortfall. In addition to expressing my concerns during hearings and work-group meetings, I engaged with the school district and Senate leadership to ensure the inclusion of a new budget line to support districts affected by charter school saturation. As a result, the Senate budget allocated \$24 million in new aid for Hempstead schools, while also providing assistance to districts in Buffalo and Rochester.

Further, as a former school board member, I fought to include a new \$1,000 tax deduction to help cover the cost of classroom supplies and expenses for educators, which teachers often pay out of pocket. This proposal would help offset the cost that many teachers bear in order to deliver quality classroom experiences, and better support kids in their learning.

In my ongoing efforts to guarantee safe drinking water for all Long Islanders and to support water providers in mitigating contaminants, I advocated for an increase in the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act. The Senate One-House Budget included an additional \$200 million for this purpose. I also successfully pursued the restoration of \$1 million in funding for the Stony Brook Center for Clean Water.

As a member of the Transportation Committee, I have fought hard for dedicated roads and highway funding for Long Island. Inclement weather, heavy traffic, and years of under-resourcing have left our major arteries in a state of disrepair. I'm proud that after raising the alarm, this year's Senate budget proposal included \$31.3 million for our region's roadways, and I planned to push hard for its inclusion in the final budget.

In my role as chair of Libraries, I worked to ensure that the Senate spending plan responded to the urgent need for enhanced library funding by adding \$5 million in operating funds and \$20 million in construction aid. Additionally, library materials aid for schools has remained unchanged since 2007, so I ensured the inclusion of \$14.2 million in the Senate budget to support districts statewide.

Acknowledging that public libraries serve as vital resources for all community members, particularly the most vulnerable, I introduced legislation to create a social-work-services program for libraries in economically disadvantaged communities, allowing them to employ social workers and supervisors. The Senate budget allocated \$1 million for this initiative.

As we neared the budget deadline, I continued to work diligently to secure these priorities, as well as the numerous others I have championed.

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